

**A Study in *Aqida*, Principles of *Daw'ah* & the Issue of *Takfir*: Developing an Outline for
Renewal of *Aqida* Studies**

Yusuf Rios

Al-Huda University

1902 Baker Rd, Houston, TX 77094

Abstract

This investigation focused on the notion that there are principles regarding the nature of Revelation, the Qur'an, and the Prophetic Model that must accompany the study of *Aqida* (*mafahim*) if it is to be understood properly. Initially, we present the Hadith of Jibril as a starting point for speaking about how *Aqida* was introduced in the Hadith and then attempt to develop an argument for the need to introduce *Sirah* into *Aqida* studies as a way to contextual, make alive the transformative power of *Aqida* in Islam and its comprehensive nature. When we loose focus on the Prophetic mission we run the risk of adopting a static, academic *Aqida*, which is removed from the reality of Prophethood and runs the risk of cultivating rigidity, intolerance and extremism ending in *takfir*.

Keywords: Islam; *Aqida*; Muslims; Believer; *Takfir*

Paper Type: Exploratory

Introduction

Mahmoud Shakir reminds us of an important but oft-neglected scholarly point that is that methodology is preceded by a set of agreed upon axioms, these agreed upon axioms inform methodology (*minhaj*).¹ The problem confronted in the study of *Aqida* is the failure to acknowledge the proper axioms that ground and guide study so that we develop a sound understanding. *Aqida* study is static because it is decontextualized removed from the objectives of the Prophetic mission, and the objectives of the Qur'an.

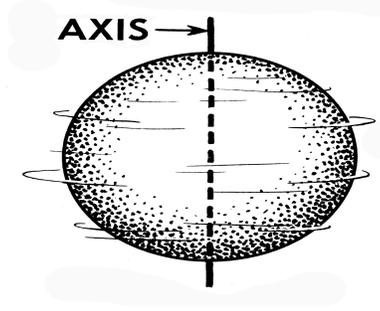
Without the proper orientation, the study of *Aqida* remains static and inclines toward extreme rigidity and dogmatism, and has the potential to become a destructive force because it loses the Prophetic character. The Prophetic Mission is to invite others to *Din*, to work for the cultivation of *Din* as a lived reality that imbues life that should be the primary spirit guiding *Aqida* studies. We can not come to that understanding without returning back to the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* so we get an insight into what dynamic *Aqida* looks but even the concept of returning back to the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* needs to be rehabilitated. In this investigation the argument is made that we need to look to the objectives of the Qur'an, the character of Islamic legislation, and the *Sirah* with a focus on Axis Hadith so that we develop a principles, grounded comprehensive understanding of *Aqida*. The *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah* are tightly interconnected and in need of each other but both need to be contextualized by *Sirah*, and understanding the characteristics of Islamic revelation.

Text of Hadith Jibril

¹ See: *Risalat Fi' at-Tariq Ila Thaqaafatina*, Mahmoud Shakir

Also on the authority of 'Umar (r) who said: While we were one day sitting with the Messenger of Allah (saw) there appeared before us a man dressed in extremely white clothes and with very black hair. No traces of journeying were visible on him, and none of us knew him. He sat down close by the Prophet (saw) rested his knee against his thighs, and said: "O Muhammad! Inform me about Islam." The Messenger of Allah (saw) replied: "Islam is that you should testify that there is no deity except Allah and that Muhammad is His Messenger, that you should perform salah (ritual prayer), pay the zakah, fast during Ramadan, and perform Hajj (pilgrimage) to the House (the Ka'bah at Makkah), if you can find a way to it (or find the means for making the journey to it)." He said: "You have spoken truly." We were astonished at his thus questioning him and then telling him that he was right, but he went on to say, "Inform me about iman (faith)." He (the Prophet) answered, "It is that you believe in Allah and His angels and His Books and His Messengers and in the Last Day, and in fate (qadar), both in its good and in its evil aspects." He said, "You have spoken truly." Then he (the man) said, "Inform me about Ihsan." He (the Prophet) answered, "It is that you should serve Allah as though you could see Him, for though you cannot see Him yet He sees you." He said, "Inform me about the Hour." He (the Prophet) said, "About that the one questioned knows no more than the questioner." So he said, "Well, inform me about it's signs." He said, "They are that the slave-girl will give birth to her mistress and that you will see the barefooted ones, the naked, the destitute, the herdsmen of the sheep (competing with each other) in raising lofty buildings." Thereupon the man went off. I waited a while, and then he (the Prophet) said, "O 'Umar, do you know who that questioner was?" I replied, "Allah and His Messenger know better." He said, "That was Jibril. He came to teach you your religion." (Muslim)

Axis Hadiths: Their Importance and Value and Relationship to Hadith Jibril



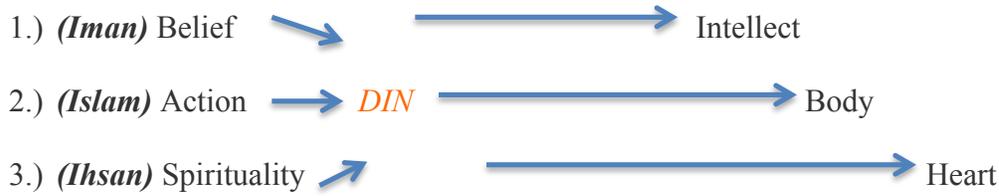
The Hadith of *Jibril* is an *Axis Hadith*. This type of Hadith is foundational, Islamic knowledge revolves around these texts because of their comprehensive import. The *Scholars of Hadith* concentrated serious research effort into identifying *Axis Hadiths* because of their value and importance. *Axis Hadiths* identify for us principles for understanding and maxims that afford us the necessary knowledge for a systematic and a comprehensive insight into *Islam* they serve as guides along the path of understanding and research.

As an example the *Forty Hadith of Imam Nawawi*² is a collection of hadith gathered around the concept of collecting *Axis Hadiths in one place*. *Axis Hadiths* afford us a bird's eye understanding rather than a piecemeal insight, presenting meaning in relation to a whole. Hadith *Jibril* stands as *Axis Hadith "par excellence"* entitled *Umm as-Sunnah* (Mother of the *Sunnah*). It concisely expresses the reality of Islam in its breadth, merging key elements of creed, practice, manners and spirituality together as a synergistic whole.³

The Hadith of *Jibril* concisely outlines the *Din* as three essential areas: *Islam*, *Iman* and *Ihsan*. These three areas form the foundations for the whole of *Din*. In this sense *Din* is a way of life, addressing the human being as a whole. This meaning is further supported in that Hadith of *Jibril* concisely outlines the key tenets of *Iman* in the context of the whole *Din*.

² See: *Forty Hadith, Imam Nawawi*

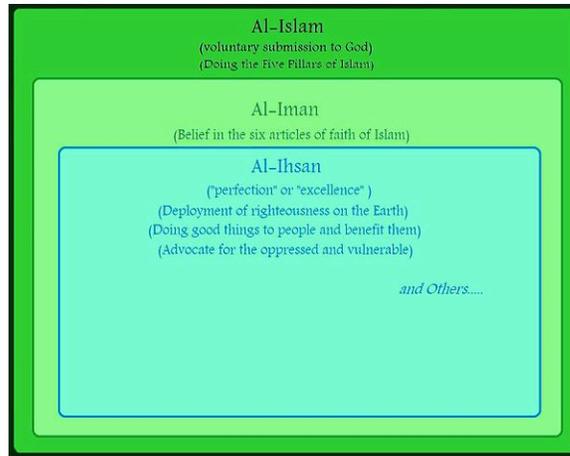
³ See: *Jami' Ulum Wa'l Hikam, Hafidh Ibn Rajab*



The Hadith addresses the reality of the whole human being and existence (*body, intellect, and the heart*)⁴ therefore the reality of life as a whole is addressed-the conceptual, emotional, material, social, and spiritual. Hadith *Jibril* communicates to us the reality of *Tawhid* in its breadth and depth, “[w]ith *Tawhid* one enters into Islam, and with it one will depart from this world. The Prophet (saw) said, He whose last words are “There is no god except Allah, will enter Paradise. It is therefore, the first obligation and the last obligation⁵” For this reason is sums up what is necessary to be a Muslim and further to be a believer and person of excellence and virtue.

⁴ See: Muhammad Ddo, *Musma al-Iman Wa Dawabit at-Takfir*, Part 1

⁵ See: *Aqida Tahawi, Sharh Iz al-Hanafi, V. 1, p. 2.*



Hadith Jibril: The Issue of Diversity of Narrations

There are various versions of the Hadith of *Jibril*, a detailed comparison and analysis of these narrations is beyond the scope of intent here. What suffices in this research is a basic analysis of the narration and noting its soundness. The various narrations of the Hadith of *Jibril* relate differences in sequencing, some put *Iman* first and others *Islam* first, in regards to the first matter *Jibril* questioned the Prophet Muhammad (saw) about. In the textual version we are working with *Jibril* (as) questions the Prophet Muhammad about Islam firstly.⁶

The Shahada: Initiation Into Islam

It is necessary to point out that in the definition of Islam as found in Hadith *Jibril* Islam is defined simply as reciting the *Shahada*, praying the *Salah*, giving the *Zakah*, fasting *Ramadan* and undertaking *Hajj*, *performance of the Hajj* is according to ability. Our version of the Hadith sequences Islam as the very first thing *Jibril* (as) questioned the Prophet Muhammad (saw) about.

⁶ See: *al-Futuhat al-Wahabiyya Sharh al-Arbain an-Nawawia*, Shaikh Burhan ad-Din ash-Shabrakhiti al-Maliki

-“Islam is that you should testify that there is no deity except Allah and that Muhammad is His Messenger, that you should perform salah (ritual prayer), pay the zakah, fast during Ramadan, and perform Hajj (pilgrimage) to the House (the Ka'bah at Makkah), if you can find a way to it (or find the means for making the journey to it).” (Hadith Jibril)

There is an indication in the text that what suffices to be a Muslim is to declare one’s belief in the Oneness and Uniqueness of Allah (swt) and that Muhammad is His Messenger (saw) then to act upon the other four pillars: *Salah*, *Zakah*, *Fast* and *Hajj*. It is if there is an emphasis on acting upon belief as the foundational step in the life of the Muslim. The details of *Iman* are a matter that follows. So there is sense *fiqh of priorities* here. Although we have narrations that indicate to the sufficiency of the witness of Allah’s oneness for salvation, in order for one’s *shahada* to be complete it is necessary to acknowledge and affirm the Prophethood of the Muhammad (saw). This is emphasized in the Hadith of *Jibril* in the definition of *Islam* and in the definition of *Iman*.

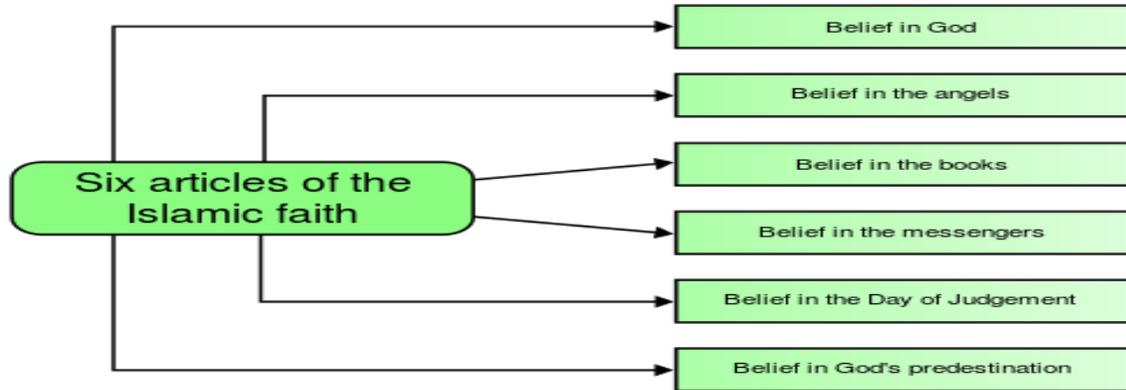
Now we enter another level of complexity in the Hadith in that it points to the bases of *Iman*. Contained in these six bases is the *Shahada* in a general sense along with a series of necessary tenets and “[t]hey are the principles and foundations with which the messengers were sent and for which the divine scriptures were revealed. The faith of any person is incomplete without his belief in all of them, in the manner indicated in the Qur’an and the Sunnah of the Prophet (saw). Whoever denies any of those six truths places himself outside the boundaries of faith and becomes a Kaafir (disbeliever).”⁷ Dr. Na’im Yasin notes that one’s commitment to

⁷ *The Book of Imam, Dr. Mohammad Naim Yasin p.9*

Islam remains incomplete without professing and assenting to the six bases of faith. On the other hand, what is sufficient to be a Muslim is to profess the *Shahada*. The details of *Aqida* come with time and this we learn from the Hadith of Mu'adh below.

“Ibn Abbas reported: When the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, sent Mu'adh to Yemen, he said to him: Verily, you are coming to a people from the people of the Book, so call them to testify there is no God but Allah and I am the Messenger of Allah. If they obey in the matter then teach them that Allah has obligated five prayers in each day and night. If they obey that then teach them that Allah has obligated charity to be taken from the rich and given to the poor. If they obey that beware not to take from the best of their wealth. Be on guard from the supplication of the oppressed, for there is no barrier between it and Allah. (Muslim)”

This is where we note a fissure, a separation between *fiqh* of *da'wah*, *fiqh* of priorities and the academic study of *Aqida*. If we look at the way the Prophet (saw) taught Mu'adh to communicate Islam we see that there is an order of priorities, an understanding of the people, and educational process. The personal, spiritual, and social realms are interlocked and *Iman* is coupled with justice. In the Hadith priority is not focused on detail but on the basics, foundation of the belief in Allah and His Messenger (saw) and action. *Aqida* studies are divested from a true understanding of *da'wah* and priorities.



Notice in the presentation of the six bases of faith in the Hadith of *Jibril* the *Shahada* is mentioned in a general manner subsumed under belief in Allah and belief in the Messengers:

"...Inform me about iman (faith)." He (the Prophet) answered, "It is that you believe in Allah and His angels and His Books and His Messengers and in the Last Day, and in fate (qadar), both in its good and in its evil aspects." He said, "You have spoken truly... (Excerpted from the Hadith Jibril)"

Textual Indications

An important principle in the Hadith is found in the indication to the *Din* having its origin in (*wahi*) revelation, at the end of the Hadith, the Prophet (saw) informs Umar (r) that *Jibril* (a) came to teach them their *Din*.

Upon reflection, this is an instance, wherein, we can derive a number of concepts:

The Companions (r) witnessed revelation understood its origin to be divine this allowed them to delineate parameters for reason and this they learned in their interaction with the Prophet (saw). They understood the context of its manifestation.

The Companions (r) were taught, guided, and formed by the Prophet Muhammad (saw) in relation to the whole of life. The Prophet (saw) modeled the Islam.

The *Din* was taught with manners and this we learn from the interaction of Jibril with the Prophet (saw) and the Companions with the Prophet (saw). The *Din* was taught as a whole. So that manners, rulings, spirituality and belief were integrated and understanding accompanied action.

The experience of the Companions is what we lack. For this reason the *Sirah* of the Prophet (saw) becomes a means to gain insight into the way they learned Islam, the manner they were taught.

The Relationship of the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah*

Without reference to the *Sunnah* we are left with a gap in understanding the goals of revelation, *da'wah* and belief. "In Islam, there is an axiomatic truth, namely, that the *Qur'an* is the foundational source for every one of the doctrines, laws, systems, principles, and rules that comprise the religion of Islam. The *Sunnah* is a clarification and explanation of the *Qur'an*, an exemplar of how to submit to its teachings, and an application by the Prophet of what the *Qur'an* has enjoined. There are numerous differences between the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah*. The *Qur'an*, to begin with, is a foundational source for Islamic legal rulings, whereas the authentic *Sunnah* is a binding source of clarification of what is stated in the *Qur'an*. The *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah* are mutually supporting sources of evidence. There can be no conflict, contradiction, inconsistency, or disagreement between them. . . . The *Sunnah* clarifies anything affirmed in the *Qur'an*.⁸"

Because the *Sunnah* plays such an important role in explaining the contents of the *Qur'an* it is

⁸ *Apostasy*, Taha Jabir al-Alwani, p.9

key to look at the *Sunnah* in relation to the *Qur'an* and further in relation to the life of the Prophet (saw)

On the Practical Function of the *Sunnah* and *Sirah*

The Prophetic example, His (saw) actions, speech and consent clarify the truths, essence and rulings of the *Qur'an* teaching us how to practically implement the *Qur'an* in time and space. The life of the Prophet Muhammad (saw) was a perfect embodiment and model of the *Qur'an* in time and space. For this reason Aisha (r) described him (saw) as the walking *Qur'an* because he implemented the *Qur'an* completely. In this sense we get a better insight into, understanding of the relationship between the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah*. The *Sunnah* translates the *Qur'an* into space and time.

Sirah* as part of *Sunnah

The scholars of *Hadith* afford us an important insight and that is they define the *Sunnah* in such a manner that it includes the *Sirah* (the Prophetic biography). We gain from this addition to the definition of the *Sunnah* as found among the scholars of *Usul al-Fiqh* who define and limit the *Sunnah* to all the Prophet did, said or consented to. The benefit we gain by considering *Sirah* as part of *Sunnah* is enormous on the interpretative front. *Sirah* gives us a comprehensive model that serves as a source of insight for understanding how the Prophet embodied the *Qur'an*, carried out teaching and undertook missionary activities. It contextualizes the reality of revelation and in this sense serves as an expansion to the knowledge of *Asbab an-Nuzul* by providing us the context of revelation (*Siyah an-Nuzul*).

We make a leap here to argue a greater role for *Sirah* in teaching *Aqida* put differently that *Sirah* plays a central roll in assisting the interpretative process and in translating Islam into time and space. Like *Asbab an-Nuzul* assists in interpreting the text of the *Qur'an* by providing context for the a specific *ayat* of the *Qur'an* and the reason for narrations (*Asbab al-Wurud*) aid us in understanding why specific *Hadith* were narrated, *Sirah* aids in not only with specifics but goes further by contextualizing in a comprehensive manner.

Sirah provides a comprehensive context for understanding the text as well as encompasses the specific contextual aids needed to interpret the texts. So it encompasses the *Asbab an-Nuzul* and *Asbab al-Wurud* but transcends their function in interpretation by modeling *Islam* as a complete way of life. *Sirah* contextualizes for us the reality of the *Din* practiced. *Sirah* is necessary to understand *Aqida* and to transform the study of *Aqida* into a dynamic force. Like knowing the *Ahkam al-Wadi'* are necessary before implementing a *Hukm Shar'iah*, *Sirah* is necessary in order to understand how to frame *Aqida* studies and have it relate to context. The scholars of *Hadith* also define *Aqida* as *Sunnah* meaning that body of beliefs that outline what Muslims ought to believe but they usual therefore *Aqida* is tied intimately to *Sunnah*. In their understanding *Sunnah* not only encompasses *Sirah* but also the character of the Prophet (saw).

Developing A Model For Aqida Studies

Imam *al-Bayhaqi*, in *Shu'ab al-Iman* deviates from the dominant model and format in presenting *Aqida* as a closed static system wherein *Iman* is outlined in a systematic mathematical fashion divorced from any connection to objectives much less Islam. This understanding of *Aqida* is not transformational but rather academic. This general tendency found in most the texts

of *Aqida* regardless of orientation, whether composed by the scholars of *Hadith* or the scholars of *Ilm al-Kalam*. Both trends tend to present *Aqida* as a static closed system cut off from any other concerns then issues of debate for the most part.

Ironically, Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal composed a text in *Aqida* entitled *Usul as-Sunnah*⁹, very terse text that only addressed problem areas, issues that had arisen in his time.

For Imam Ahmad the primary source texts (*Qur'an* and *Sunnah*) were given priority as sources in Shar'iah. For this reason, we can assume with justification that his dislike and refusal to codify his opinions into a *madhab* indicates the importance of the primary source texts¹⁰. In *Aqida* he only addressed a few key problem areas in brief suggesting that the true source of *Aqida* is to be found in the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah*.

The Problem of Decontextualizing Aqida from the Sunnah: The Case of the Khawarij

The scholars of *hadith* define *Sunnah* with breadth, encompasses the character of the Prophet, his physical features as well as his actions, sayings and consent, the *Sirah* and *Aqida*. In this sense *Aqida* is connected to character. the prevalent practice in *Aqida* studies is to decontextualize it from the spirit and objectives of the mission (*risalat*) of the Prophet (saw). Add that the issue of *Aqida* studies being divorced from character content, the inculcation of good character and spirituality and community building.

Imam Shah Wali Ullah (r), in *Hujjat Ullah al-Baligha*, states: “The greatest of the Prophets in rank is the one whose mission has an additional dimension and this the intention (*qasd*) of Allah (swt), for him is that he be a cause for bringing the people “out darkness into

⁹ See: *Usul al-Sunnah*, Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal

¹⁰ See: *Four Imams Muhammad Abu Zahra Translated and Adapted by Aisha Bewley*, p.462

light” and that his people be “the best community brought out for mankind,” and thus his mission encompasses an additional mission.¹¹ This objective has to inform *Aqida* studies, and *Da'wah* effort.

When we look historically perhaps the biggest error of the *Khawarij* in understanding the *Qur'an* was that they failed to regard specifics in relation to the general import of the *Qur'an* so they took *ayat* of the *Qur'an* in their general sense without considering the subtleties and shades of their meaning and ignored referring to the “*fiqh* of priorities” that are necessary for its application and ignored the Prophetic method of *Da'wah*.

They divorced *Aqida* from the character and objectives of the Prophetic mission and model not considering the role of the *Sunnah* in mitigating its meaning and application. They confused major sin with absolute *kufir* disregarding the fact that sin and *kufir* have various degrees and that not all sin is an act of absolute *kufir*.

Look at this descriptive of the *Khawarij*, “...the radical *Khawarij*, who initially rejected any compromise with the caliphate, insisting that the sins of the caliphs not only destroyed their legitimacy but imposed a duty of resistance to them upon every individual Muslim. The revulsion felt by the *Kharijites* against the caliphs was such that they held that the committing of major sins negated faith, and thus placed the sinner outside Islam. Adopting the slogan **La hukma illa li'Llah** (judgment is God's alone; cf. *Qur'an* 6:57; 12:40, 67; 18:26), the *Kharijites*

¹¹ *Hujjat Ullah al-Baligha*, p. 252.

appeared to vest authority directly in the text of the Qur'an as the primary manifestation of God's will; human political authority was de-emphasized and undermined in consequence.¹²

It was this reality, understanding the objectives of the *Qur'an* and further Prophethood that was missing from the position of the *Khawarij*, their interpretation of the *Qur'an* violated the very intent of the *Qur'an* not due to lack of sincerity but rather lack of decontextualizing *Aqida* from the principles of understanding and objectives of Islam –the Qur'an and Prophethood.

The danger, decontextualizing *Aqida*, in such approach is that the intricacies of dealing with people and the challenges and obligations of *da'wah*, and *fiqh* of priorities are neglected. It is easy then to negate and invalidate the faith of another if they do not fit into the mathematical like *Aqida* scheme. In the dynamic approach to *Aqida* studies consideration is given to the objectives of the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah* (note: *Sunnah* in the widest sense of meaning).

Currently, *Aqida* is studied in a checklist fashion on one side of the checklist we have what makes you a Muslim and on the other side what makes you a *Kafir*. *Aqida* for the Companions was learned from the Qur'an in a comprehensive manner and focused on the *Meccan* Qur'an, the *Meccan* Qur'an focused on *Tawhid*, the hereafter, good deeds, being good to others, justice, spirituality, and manners.

¹² Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology, p. 37-38

Imam Izz ad-Din Abdul Salam writes that “[...]the aim (*gharad*) of *tafsir* of the *Qur’an* is to reach the objectives of the *Qur’an* that are beneficial in relation to matters of the *Din*.¹³ Further, Allah (swt) commissioned the Prophets (as), revealed the Books to make establish benefit for human beings in this world and the next and to safeguard against harm.

“So, whoever does an atom's weight of good shall see it and whoever does an atom's weight of evil shall see it (*Zalzalah* 8-9.)”

When we look at the history of *Qur’anic* revelation we gain insight into the reality of how the Companions *Din*. In specific when we look at the Meccan *Qur’an*, the foundation of education for the Companions we come to understand that *Iman* was taught with objectives. The scholars of *Qur’an* note that the Meccan revelation revolved primarily around teaching *Iman*. Imam Shatibi adds to that “[t]he Meccan part of the *Qur’an* laid down the basic principles of law and religion that were elaborated in Medina. This is the conclusion al-Shatibi reached in the *Muwafaqat* (III, 104) saying that a closer examination of the Medinan portions of the *Qur’an* reveals that they generally supplement the basic guidelines that were revealed in Mecca.¹⁴” The objectives referred to by Imam Shatibi are the follow the *Shariah* came to preserve and cultivate these objectives:

- i. Din
- ii. Life
- iii. Intellect
- iv. Lineage

¹³ See: *Maqasid al-Kitab*, Izz Din Abdul Salam, p. 70

¹⁴ *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence*, Muhammad Hashim Kamali, p. 23

v. Wealth

vi. Dignity

The Companions understood the Qur'an as dynamic, having objectives. Imam *Ibn Kathir* explains the following *ayat* and from it we gain an insight into the underlying purpose for the prayer.

“Verily, the Salah prevents from Al-Fahsha' and Al-Munkar and the remembrance of Allah is greater indeed (Ankabut: 45).”

Prayer includes two things: the first of which is giving up immoral behavior and evil deeds, i.e., praying regularly enables a person to give up these things. Imam Ahmad recorded that Abu Hurayrah said: "A man came to the Prophet and said, 'So-and-so prays at night, but when morning comes, he steals.' The Prophet said: (What you are saying (i.e., the Salah) will stop him from doing that.)¹⁵

“Verily I am God; there is no god but I; therefore serve Me, and perform the prayer for my remembrance (TAHA:14).”

From these *ayat* we gather that the Companions were taught the *Qur'an* in a purposeful dynamic way, they had an understanding of the objectives of *Din*.

The *Qur'an* presents to us two *axioms* that follow in two *ayat* below:

¹⁵ (*Ibn Kathir Retrieved (2014):*
http://www.qtafsir.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2165&Itemid=85)

“This day, I have perfected your religion for you, completed My favor upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion (Maida: 3)”

“And on the day when We will raise up in every people a witness against them from among themselves, and bring you as a witness against these-- and We have revealed the Book to you explaining clearly everything, and a guidance and mercy and good news for those who submit (Nahl: 89)”

Imam Ibn Ashur’s commentary on *Surah Nahl: 89* discloses that the *Qur’an* provides guidance in every sphere of life because of the word “everything” indicates a general meaning¹⁶ and therefore the word everything applies to “all things.” This *ayat* discloses for us the highest *Qur’anic* objective: realizing benefit for the human being and safeguarding from harm.

“And on the day when We will raise up in every people a witness against them from among themselves, and bring you as a witness against these-- and We have revealed the Book to you explaining clearly everything, and a guidance and mercy and good news for those who submit (Nahl: 89)”

The Qur’an and Prophethood

The concepts of final, completeness and relatedness are key ideas for understanding the nature of revelation and Prophethood in *Islam*. If Islam is not related to all of life this entails the continuous need for guidance and by default that Islam is not capable of guiding the human being in all of life’s facets and spheres and changes. There would be a need for another Prophet and that would result in the Prophet Muhammad (saw) not being the last and final Prophet and Seal. This creates a sense of urgency in education and *da’wah*, responsibility. Maulana Yusuf

¹⁶ Raissouni, *Kulliat al-Assasia*, p. 30

Kandhelwi, in volume 1 of *Hayatus Sahaba*, collected over a 100 pages of various examples of the Prophet and the *Sahaba* engaged in *Da'wah* effort indicating how essential *Da'wah* is to the cause of Islam and to the education of the Companions. The goal of *Da'wah* is to call the people to *Tawhid*, so the goal is to bring people into the *Din* and support their growth. Secondly, the goal of *Da'wah* is to establish the *Din*. To neglect these goals: education of the people into *Tawhid* and cultivate the way of life of *Islam* is a deviation from the original intents of *Prophethood* itself.

Dr. Abdul Majid Najjar, holds that of the manner in which the *Din* is preserved is by way of *tabligh* (*da'wah*), “the intent of *tabligh* is to introduce, simplify and clarify to the people. *Tabligh* could be exemplified in teaching and formation of people or in correcting the Muslim in areas they have erred from the correct understanding of the *Din*, or in matters of action, or it could be in communicating Islam to other than Muslims, to those who are not cognizant of the reality of Islam.” “... *Tabligh* of the *Din* to the people in its various meanings takes on the ruling of an obligation (*wajib*) in the *Shariah*...the higher intent of *tabligh* being preservation of the *Din*.¹⁷

The *Sirah* of the Prophet Muhammad (saw) illustrates the condition and concern of the Prophet Muhammad (saw) prior to Prophethood highlighting the concern of the Prophet (saw) for his (saw) people, aware of their condition, he desired their rectification and guidance. He writes, “[t]he Prophet’s heart was restless about his people, given their belief, a faith rooted in a

¹⁷ *Maqasid ash-Shariah, Abdel Majid an-Najjar*, p. 70-71

weak foundation of polytheism, and baseless conceptualizations, superstitions being wide spread among them. Yet, confronted with this reality he (saw) had no clear course and method or specific approach to address and rectify the condition of his people and environment. So his heart was not content, uneasy for lack of a course, method by which to guide his people. (*Rahiqum Makhtum*, p. 87)” This is the supreme goal of Aqida, to guide the people to the mercy of Allah (swt).

Maulana Mubarakfuri, discloses the reality of the Prophet’s condition and concern and this picture gives us an insight into the life of the Prophet (saw) and his mission. The Prophet (saw) had a concern for humanity.

In the *Qur’an* we find:

“We sent you not except as a Mercy for all creation (Anbia: 107)”

Imam Tahir Ibn Ashur, in *Tahir Wa’l Tanwir*, comments that *Surah al-Anbia* as a whole was established as a pillar that confirmed the Messengership of the Prophet (saw) and a verified his effort of *da’wah*. In specific, the *ayat* under consideration (*Surah Anbia: 107*) illustrates that the Prophet (saw) was sent as a mercy to the whole of creation, a mercy not restricted to human beings. Imam al-Alusi adds in *Ruh al-Mani*, that the meaning of the *ayat* encompasses both the believer and unbeliever. Further, the mercy referred to in the text extends to the next world. Now what distinguishes the believer from the unbeliever is that the unbeliever does not prepare for what is to come through following the guidance of the Prophet (saw) and does not partake of the mercy in the hereafter consequently.

Imam Ibn al-Qayim, relates that of the names the Prophet (saw), is the “*Nabi ar-Rahmat*, he is the one Allah (swt) sent to the creation as a mercy and showered mercy on the people of the Earth, both believer and unbeliever.¹⁸” He also notes, the Prophet (saw) to be “*Nabi at-Tauba*, because is the one by whom Allah (swt) open the gate of repentance for the people of the Earth, Allah turned toward the people in forgiveness in a manner never realized by the people of the Earth prior to.¹⁹”

The Prophets (as) were commissioned and charged to teach and preach and guide.

“He it is Who sent among the unlettered ones a Messenger (Muhammad SAW) from among themselves, reciting to them His Verses, purifying them (from the filth of disbelief and polytheism), and teaching them the Book (this Quran, Islamic laws and Islamic jurisprudence) and al-Hikmah (As-Sunnah: legal ways, orders, acts of worship, etc. of Prophet Muhammad SAW). And verily, they had been before in manifest error (Jumah: 2)”

Imam Shah Wali Ullah adds a further dimension to our understanding of the *ayat* by describing the mission of the Prophet (saw) states: “He sent one who will correct their deviation and “teach them the Book.²⁰” So the Prophet (saw) guides people to the right path by educating them into the realities of the *Qur’an* thereby clarifying some of the objectives of his Prophethood. The Prophetic teaching is indicated to in brief in the Supporting this understanding the *Qur’an* encourages responsibility, accountability and action, working to realize benefit in this

¹⁸ See: *Zad al-Maad, Ibn al-Qayyim V.1*, p.93

¹⁹ See: *Zad al-Maad, Ibn al-Qayyim V.1*, p. 92

²⁰ See: *Hujjat Ullah al-Baligha*, Shah Wali Ullah, p. 253

world and the next and calls to *ibadah*, -meaning acts of obedience and circumventing acts of disobedience.

The Relationship of the Qur'an to the Sunnah

There is a need to reoriented *Aqida* studies so that follows the spirit communicated by the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah*, (Note: Sunnah is defined in the sense of the scholars of Hadith) based on the following principle. "In *Islam*, there is an axiomatic truth, namely, that the *Qur'an* is the foundational source for every one of the doctrines, laws, systems, principles, and rules that comprise the religion of Islam. The *Sunnah* is a clarification and explanation of the *Qur'an*, an exemplar of how to submit to its teachings, and an application by the Prophet of what the *Qur'an* has enjoined. There are numerous differences between the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah*. The *Qur'an*, to begin with, is a foundational source for Islamic legal rulings, whereas the authentic *Sunnah* is a binding source of clarification of what is stated in the *Qur'an*. The *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah* are mutually supporting sources of evidence. There can be no conflict, contradiction, inconsistency, or disagreement between them...The *Sunnah* clarifies anything affirmed in the *Qur'an*.²¹"

When we return the Hadith of Mu'adh wherein he is sent to Yemen as a Judge by the Prophet Muhammad (saw) we see that Mu'adh indicated that if he did not find the answer to a matter in the *Qur'an* he would resort to the *Sunnah* and if he found nothing in the *Sunnah* he would resort to *ijtihad*. So the meaning here cannot be that the *Qur'an* relates to everything in detail lest we fall into a contradiction between the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah* and that is not possible as

²¹ *Apostasy*, Taha Jabir al-Alwani, p.9

mentioned earlier but rather what we can understand then is that the Qur'an clarifies the necessary principles that relate to everything in life, universal principles –objectives.

Some companions of Mu'adh ibn Jabal said: *When the Apostle of Allah (a) intended to commission Mu'adh ibn Jabal to the Yemen (as a judge), he asked: How will you judge when the occasion of deciding a case arises? He replied: I shall judge in accordance with Allah's Book. He asked: (What will you do) if you do not find any guidance in Allah's Book? He replied: (I shall act) in accordance with the Sunnah of the Apostle of Allah (a). He asked: (What will you do) if you do not find any guidance in the Sunnah of the Apostle of Allah (a) and in Allah's Book? He replied: I shall resort to ijtihad and I shall spare no effort. The Apostle of Allah (a) then patted him on the breast and said: Praise be to Allah Who has helped the messenger of the Apostle of Allah to find something which pleases the Apostle of Allah. (Ahmad, Tirmidhi, Darimi, & Abu Dawud)²²*

Likewise we see that Mu'adh was taught fiqh of priorities in *Da'wah* as well as the proper manner to translate the Qur'an and Sunnah into time and space.

Ibn Abbas reported: When the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, sent Mu'adh to Yemen, he said to him: Verily, you are coming to a people from the people of the Book, so call them to testify there is no God but Allah and I am the Messenger of Allah. If they obey in the matter then teach them that Allah has obligated five prayers in

²² Ibn Taymiyah, Amir as-Sanani, Shaukani, Ibn al-Qayyim & Ibn Kathir declared the Hadith Sound (Sahih) in the least the Hadith is Fair (Hasan). They took a position contrary to Shaikh al-Albani, who contested the authenticity of this hadith overall (chain and text), and in fact rejected it. A good number of the scholars of hadith consider it sound enough for considering it evidence.

each day and night. If they obey that then teach them that Allah as obligated charity to be taken from the rich and given to the poor. If they obey that beware not to take from the best of their wealth. Be on guard from the supplication of the oppressed, for there is no barrier between it and Allah. (Muslim)

These two hadith when paired together give us an understanding of how the Companions were prepared to establish the *Din*, and do *dawah* and teach so *Aqida* in this model is dynamic. They were taught to understand the people they are dealing with and to understand priorities in *da'wah* and interpretation, how to properly interpret and implement Islam. As mentioned earlier they were instructed into the Objectives of the Islam and *Prophethood* itself and understood their role as vehicles to communicate the Prophetic objective –guide the people to Allah (swt).

“The Prophet and his Companions memorized the *Qur'an*. This was facilitated by the fact that it was revealed piecemeal over a period of twenty-three years. The *Qur'an* itself explains the rationale of graduality (*tanjim*) as follows: *'The unbelievers say, why has not the Qur'an been sent down to him [Muhammad] all at once. Thus [it is revealed] that your hearts may be strengthened, and We rehearse it to you gradually, and well-arranged'* (al-Furqan, 23:32). Elsewhere we read in the text: *'It is a Qur'an We have divided into parts in order that you may recite it to people at intervals: We have revealed it by stages'* (Bani Isra'il, 17:106). Graduality afforded the believers opportunity to reflect over the *Qur'an* and retain it. It also allowed continuous contact and renewal of spiritual strength. Furthermore, in view of the widespread illiteracy of the Arabs at the time, had the *Qur'an* been revealed all at once, they would have found it difficult to understand. It was revealed piecemeal so as to avoid hardship to the believers

in matters, which touched their lives. The ban on the consumption of alcohol affords an interesting example of the *Qur'anic* graduality in legislation.²³

The early stages of *da'wah* consisted of calling the people to Allah (swt), then bringing them into *Dar al-Arqam* then building a community around the Masjid, then developing the functions and aims of the Masjid.²⁴ The *Sunnah*, as the primary interpreter of the *Qur'an* accomplishes the task of clarifying and disclosing the objectives of the *Qur'an* so the Book can be implemented in a practical manner. The practical aspect of the Islamic revelation and legislation is inherently gradual in nature.

So from its initial stages of descent a hallmark characteristic of the revelation and legislation of Islam is graduality. This point holds true for *da'wah* as well or education and formation in Islam. It is the *Sirah* that teaches us that the *Prophet (saw)* cultivated brotherhood among the companions as he taught them Aqida, their commitment to the *Shahada* entailed committing to building the community, so that a community of *Iman* exist, so much so that when the Khawarij rebelled, Ali named them “our brothers.”

In relation to the *Qur'an*, Imam Rashid Rida states: “[i]ndeed from the objectives of the *Qur'an* is the reformation of human beings, individual, groups and peoples, directing them into the path of guidance, bringing about their brotherhood in humanity, uniting them and raising their intellectual station while purifying their desire...

²³ See: *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence*, Mohammad Hashim Kamali, p. 30

²⁴ See: *Rahiqum Makhtum (the stages of da'wah)*, Ali Salabi's *The Noble Life of the Prophet Muhammad*

The *Qur'an* is a Book of practical character formation and education of individuals, families and society.²⁵” Imam Rashid Rida states: “in the *Qur'an* there are 30 *ayat* that repeat the censure of desire and its prohibition, explaining that desire prevents one from finding and following the truth. Another 200 *ayat* emphasize “*taqwa*” and praise those who have attained it.²⁶ The constancy of themes that we find in the *Qur'an* is what informed and built the *Aqida* of the Companions so that *Aqida* was tied into a network of concepts and values and never static. The Companions learned 10 *ayat* at a time understanding them and practicing them this is a point oft repeated but barely understood in the context of *Qur'an* itself, the manner in which the *Qur'an* leaves an impression and connects points of belief to other concepts of Islam showing how deeply they are intertwined.

Ibn Abbas reported: When the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, sent Mu'adh to Yemen, he said to him: Verily, you are coming to a people from the people of the Book, so call them to testify there is no God but Allah and I am the Messenger of Allah. If they obey in the matter then teach them that Allah has obligated five prayers in each day and night. If they obey that then teach them that Allah has obligated charity to be taken from the rich and given to the poor. If they obey that beware not to take from the best of their wealth. Be on guard from the supplication of the oppressed, for there is no barrier between it and Allah. (Muslim)

²⁵ *Wahy Muhammadi*, Rashid Rida, p.62

²⁶ *Wahy Muhammadi*, Rashid Rida, p.98

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

Time is witness that, surely, mankind suffers loss, except for those of faith,

Who do good, and become a model of truthful living,

and together practice patience and constancy.

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